

Message Text

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R 240815Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4801
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DEA HQS WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 0258

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: SNAR, BM

SUBJECT: VISIT OF U.S. OFFICIALS TO BURMA

SUMMARY. THIS CABLE PROVIDES A WRAP-UP REPORT ON THE JANUARY 17-21 VISIT TO BURMA BY SENIOR ADVISER TO THE SECRETARY ON NARCOTICS MATTERS MATHEA FALCO, WHITE HOUSE NARCOTICS ADVISER CHARLES O'KEEFE, AND EA DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROBERT OAKLEY. MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH MOST OF THE RANKING GUB OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION REVEALED SOME POSITIVE BURMESE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NEW THAI GOVERNMENT OF GEN. KRIANGSAK BUT CONTINUED DETERMINATION THAT CONCRETE RTG ACTIONS AGAINST TRAFFICKING/INSURGENT GROUPS SUCH AS THE SUA MUST PRECEDE COOPERATIVE THAI-BURMESE OPERATIONS ALONG THE BORDER. THE HIGH-LIGHT OF AN INTERESTING UP-COUNTRY TRIP WAS A VISIT TO AN AREA WHERE THE GUB HAS DESTROYED OVER 5000 ACRES OF OPIUM POPPIES DURING THE GROWING SEASON NOW IN PROGRESS. IN TALKS WITH MR. OAKLEY ON MATTERS OTHER THAN NARCOTICS, GUB OFFICIALS STRESSED THEIR HOPE FOR A MORE FORTHCOMING U.S. ATTITUDE ON ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO BURMA AT THE FEBRUARY 1 CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING. WE FOUND THE VISIT VERY BENEFICIAL IN INCREASING THE AWARENESS OF BOTH SIDES OF EACH OTHER'S POSITIONS AND PROBLEMS ON

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KEY ISSUES AND IN DEMONSTRATING TO THE BURMESE CONTINUED HIGH LEVEL U.S. INTEREST IN AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORTS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FIRST FULL DAY OF THE VISIT, JANUARY 18, WAS DEVOTED TO MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS IN RANGOON. THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS WERE A CALL ON COL. SEIN LWIN, CHAIRMAN OF THE CENTRAL NARCOTICS

CONTROL BOARD (AND ALSO MINISTER FOR HOME AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND FOR TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS), AND A DINNER THAT EVENING HOSTED BY COL. SEIN LWIN AND ATTENDED BY MOST OF THE IMPORTANT GUB MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION, INCLUDING MILITARY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT COL. TIN OO. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION OF THAI-BURMA RELATIONS, DURING WHICH THE BURMESE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH GEN. KRIANGSAK AS THE NEW PRIME MINISTER, AND SAID THEY WERE HOPEFUL THAT THE RTG WOULD TAKE MORE VIGOROUS ACTION AGAINST THE TRAFFICKERS, PARTICULARLY THE SHAN UNITED ARMY. HOWEVER, THEY ALSO VOICED CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM ABOUT THAI INTENTIONS AND SAID THEY WOULD HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE CONCRETE RESULTS BEFORE THEY COULD MOVE TOWARD COOPERATIVE ANTI-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS WITH THE THAI ALONG THE BORDER. (FOR A FULL REPORT OF THESE DISCUSSIONS, SEE RANGOON 218.)

2. ALSO ON JANUARY 18, MEMBERS OF THE GROUP VISITED THE NARCOTICS TREATMENT CENTER AT RANGOON PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, A GUB ANTI-NARCOTICS EXHIBITION AT A LOCAL SCHOOL, AND THE UNFDAC BURMA PROJECT OFFICE. THERE WERE NO DISCUSSIONS OF IMPORTANT SUBSTANTIVE INTEREST DURING THESE VISITS. HOWEVER, PEOPLE'S POLICE FORCE DIRECTOR GENERAL U SHWE THAN EARLIER EXPRESSED DISPLEASURE WITH SLOW UNFDAC IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS PROGRAM. (WE PLAN TO DO A REPORT ON THE UNFDAC PROJECT BY THE END OF THIS WEEK.)

3. IN AN UNUSUAL DEPARTURE FROM PAST PRACTICE, THE BURMESE PRESS ON JANUARY 19 PUBLISHED A STORY ABOUT MS. FALCO'S VISIT
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TO THE ANTI-NARCOTICS EXHIBITION AND TO THE RANGOON PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME AN S/NM VISIT HAS BEEN PUBLICIZED LOCALLY. HOWEVER, THE BURMESE LATER DECLINED MS. FALCO'S OFFER TO ISSUE A LAUDATORY PUBLIC STATEMENT PRIOR TO HER DEPARTURE, ALTHOUGH THEY SAID THEY WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE SUCH A STATEMENT ISSUED OUTSIDE OF BURMA.

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4. MS. FALCO, MR. O'KEEFE, WASHINGTON STAFFERS, AND MISSION OFFICIALS INCLUDING THE AMBASSADOR, WERE TAKEN ON AN UP-COUNTRY TRIP (VIA THE NCAP-PROVIDED F-27 AND HELICOPTERS) THE MORNING OF JANUARY 19. U SHWE THAN AND DEFENSE SERVICES INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR COL. MYO AUNG WERE THE GUB HOSTS. HIGHLIGHT OF THE TRIP WAS A VISIT TO AN AREA NEAR LOI KAW, WHERE THE BUG DESTROYED MORE THAN 5000 ACRES OF OPIUM POPPIES IN DECEMBER. FROM THE RIDGE LINE ON WHICH THE GROUP LANDED, APPROXIMATELY 150 ACRES OF DESTROYED POPPY FIELDS COULD BE SEEN, AS COULD SOME FOUR ACRES OF FIELDS ABOUT TO BE DESTROYED. OTHER DESTROYED AND GROWING FIELDS WERE SEEN IN A SUBSEQUENT AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE. THE LOCAL BURMESE MILITARY COMMANDERS GAVE A BRIEFING IN WHICH HE DESCRIBED THE POPPY DESTRUCTION CAMPAIGN AS WELL AS THE CROP/INCOME SUBSTITUTION EFFORT (ASSISTANCE WITH PLANTING POTATOES, WHEAT, PEANUTS, AND COFFEE) AND THE GUB'S INTERIM SUPPORT FOR THOSE PEOPLE WHOSE POPPIES WERE DESTROYED. U SHWE THAN COMMENTED THAT EVEN MORE TROOPS AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN COMMITTED TO THE POPPY DESTRUCTION CAMPAIGN THIS YEAR THAN WAS THE CASE IN THE LAST TWO YEARS.

5. THE REST OF THE UP-COUNTRY TRIP WAS DEVOTED PRIMARILY TO

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SIGHTSEEING (INLE LAKE, PAGAN) AND ENTERTAINMENT. AS IS USUAL IN VISITS OF THIS NATURE, THE BURMESE WENT ALL OUT TO PROVIDE RED CARPET TREATMENT FOR THEIR GUESTS. AFTER SPENDING THE NIGHT IN PAGAN, THE GROUP RETURNED TO RANGOON THE AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 20.

6. MR. OAKLEY, BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE THE AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 19, CALLED ON DEPUTY MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND FINANCE DR. MAUNG SHEIN AND DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER U WIN. THE DISCUSSION WITH DR. MAUNG SHEIN WAS BY FAR THE MORE SUBSTANTIVE OF THE TWO, FOCUSING ON THE GUB'S IMPROVED ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE, PROSPECTS FOR THE UPCOMING CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING IN PARIS, AND BURMESE HOPES FOR U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. (DETAILS OF THIS CONVERSATION ARE BEING REPORTED BY SEPTTEL.) U WIN REVIEWED BURMA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS IN STANDARD TERMS,

FINDING ALL SATISFACTORY EXCEPT FOR SOME WELL-KNOWN PROBLEMS WITH THAILAND. LIKE DR. MAUNG SHEIN EARLIER, HE WAS BULLISH ABOUT BURMA'S PROSPECTS FOR BECOMING AN OIL EXPORTER, AND HE EXPRESSED HOPE FOR U.S. ECONOMIC AID. HE SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY REPORTS (APPARENTLY FROM GUB AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. U TIN LATT) THAT THE U.S. WOULD BE "VERY POSITIVE" AT THE FORTHCOMING CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING. (IN A LATER CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, DR. MAUNG SHEIN MENTIONED THESE SAME REPORTS.)

7. THERE WERE SEVERAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR FRANK AND USEFUL IN-HOUSE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE VISITORS AND MEMBERS OF THE U.S. MISSION.

8. WE BELIEVE THE VISIT WAS VERY BENEFICIAL TO BOTH THE U.S. AND BURMESE SIDES. IT SERVED TO INCREASE EACH OTHER'S AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF POSITIONS AND PROBLEMS ON KEY NARCOTICS AND BILATERAL MATTERS. MOREOVER, IT PROVIDED FOR THE BURMESE A RENEWED DEMONSTRATION OF CONTINUED HIGH-LEVEL U.S. INTEREST IN CONFIDENTIAL

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